WE CLAIM:

1. A tape measure comprising:

a case;

a spooled measuring blade enclosed by the case;

an opening defined in the case, the blade being drawable from said case via said opening;

a switch; and

braking means bistably operable between braking and non-braking positions via said switch,

wherein the blade is brakeable with respect to the opening via operation of the braking means and the switch is pivotable about an axis in the middle third of its length, the switch length being greater than a radius of the measuring blade when fully spooled.

2. The tape measure according to claim 1, wherein the axis about which the switch is pivotable lies approximately half way along the length of the switch.

3. The tape measure according to claim 1, wherein the axis about which the switch is pivotable lies in a position between approximately one third and one half of the way along the length of the switch.

4. The tape measure according to claim 1, wherein the switch length is greater than 1.5 or 2 times the radius of the fully spooled measuring blade.

5. The tape measure according to claim 1, wherein the switch length is greater than half or three-quarters of the length of the case.

6. The tape measure according to claim 1, wherein the switch length is more than half or three-quarters of the length of the footprint of the tape measure.

7. The tape measure according to claim 1, wherein the switch is located and sized so that it is operable to engage or disengage the brake by use of a thumb or finger of a user's hand and subsequently it is operable to disengage or engage the brake by use of a heel or palm of the user's hand without changing grip.

8. A tape measure compromising:

a case;

a spooled measuring blade enclosed by the case;

an opening defined in the case, the blade being drawable from said case via said opening;

a pivot switch; and

braking means bistably operable between braking and non-braking positions via said switch,

wherein the blade is brakable with respect to the opening via operation of the braking means and the pivot switch is located and sized so that it is operable to engage or disengage the braking means by use of a thumb or finger of a user's hand and subsequently it is operable to disengage or engage the braking means by use of a heel or palm of the user's hand without changing grip.

9. The tape measure according to claim 8, wherein the switch has an ergonomic shape which allows engagement and disengagement of the braking means without a change of grip required on the part of the user's hand.

10. A tape measure according to claim 8, wherein the switch is located at a top surface of the case.

11. The tape measure according to claim 8, wherein the braking means including a cam brake which is pivotable about a cam pivot axis which is fixed with respect to the case, wherein the cam brake has a rotatable joint with a first end of a push-pull member for rotation of the cam brake between braking and non-braking positions.

12. A tape measure comprising:

a case;

a spooled measuring blade enclosed by the case;

an opening defined in the case, the blade being drawable from said case via via opening; and

braking means bistably operable between braking and non-braking positions,

wherein the blade is brakeable with respect to the opening via operation of the braking means, and the braking means comprises:

a cam brake having a cam pivot axis which is fixed with respect to the case;

a push-pull member having first and second ends; and

a rotatable joint between the cam brake and said first end of said push-pull member,

wherein the cam brake is rotatable between braking and non-braking positions.

13. The tape measure according to claim 12, wherein the movement describable by the cam, in use, is purely concentric, about the cam pivot axis, with respect to the case.

14. The tape measure according to claim 12, further comprising a pivotable switch wherein the braking means is operable into the braking position by pressing the pivotable switch to one side of its pivot and into the non-braking position by pressing the pivotable switch to the other side of its pivot.

15. The tape measure according to claim 12, further comprising: a pivotable switch wherein said second end of the push-pull member is moveable by operation of said pivotable switch.

16. The tape measure according to claim 15, wherein the second end of the push-pull member is rotatably connected to one end of the pivotable switch.

17. The tape measure according to claim 12, further comprising spring means to urge the cam towards the braking position and/or towards the non-braking position.

18. The tape measure according to claim 17, wherein the spring means is arranged to bias the cam towards the braking position or the non-braking position, depending on the instantaneous position of the cam.

19. The tape measure according to claim 17, wherein the spring means is connected to the push-pull member.

20. The tape measure according to claim 19, wherein the spring means is a leaf spring, a first end of which is fixed to the push-pull member.

21. A tape measure according to claim 20 wherein, a second end of the leaf spring is slidably engageable with a retaining surface to vary the displacement between the second end of the spring and the push-pull member.

22. The tape measure according to claim 17, wherein the spring means and the push-pull member are formed in one piece from the same material.